BARRACKS 200

WHO KILLED UKRAINIAN POWs IN OLENIVKA AND HOW

Executive summary

The report identifies the weapon and ammunition the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation (AFRF) used to kill Ukrainian POWs in a standalone barracks ('barracks 200') of Volnovaska Penal Colony (No. 120) on 28 July 2022 and elaborates on the planning, organization, and implementation of the killing. It also reviews the progress in Russian, Ukrainian, and UN investigations and provides recommendations to further the Ukrainian investigation. The report is based on open-source information (including statements from POWs who survived or witnessed the attack on barracks 200), as well as interviews and affidavits of former POWs taken in 2024 and 2025. The report applies the same standard of proof as UN fact-finding bodies do, i.e., 'reasonable grounds to believe' and, in specifically mentioned cases, 'balance of probabilities'.

Since 13 August 2022, the Russian Investigative Committee (SK) has not publicly reported on the progress of the investigation into the killing of Ukrainian POWs in Olenivka. Considering the deadlines for a criminal investigation set by the Russian Criminal Procedure Code, it means that the investigation is either still ongoing or suspended with no reasonable justification for either as: (a) the SK had full access to the site, all material evidence, and witnesses for two and a half years and so had enough time to complete the investigation, and (b) in the absence of specific suspects (possible ground for suspension), it could have charged senior officers of the Ukrainian Armed Forces (UAF) as it routinely did in similar cases in the past. SK's silence indicates that the available evidence, which the SK likely has plenty of, could not be squeezed into the HIMARS version with any semblance of plausibility. It is highly doubtful, therefore, that the SK would refer the case to the court, even for a show trial, any time soon, as the risk of exposing the actual perpetrators would be too high. There is also a high probability that criminal case files, even if they have been falsified or selectively censored, still contain a lot of valuable information on the killing.

The investigation coordinated by the Office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine (OPG) has determined that the ammunition that hit barracks 200 was very likely thermobaric. Still, the OPG does not exclude other weapons, such as a planted improvised explosive device (IED). Despite the considerable investigative actions carried out over the last two and a half years, the investigation has failed to progress further, judging from the public statements of the OPG and its officials.

After the UN Secretary-General (UNSG) disbanded the Fact-Finding Mission on Olenivka (FFMO) on 5 January 2023, the UNSG's spokesperson explained that the UN "did not feel" it received security guarantees. Another reason he offered was that it was necessary "to let people return to their daytime jobs." Both reasons seem to be weak and unconvincing excuses, judging by the lack of genuine UN effort to visit the colony against the backdrop of low-intensity hostilities in the broader Olenivka area, as well as the lack of clarity regarding who wanted to return to the daytime jobs and for what reasons, and why the UNSG honored this wish at the cost of the FFMO fulfilling its mandate. Over the four months of the FFMO's existence, it remained remarkably passive and barely carried out any information-gathering, which it was supposed to do; it also did not publish any reports on its

work and the challenges it had faced. Though laziness and incompetence of the FFMO and its secretariat cannot be completely ruled out, it was most likely the UNSG who, due to political considerations, was not interested in the success of the FFMO.

The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)—through the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine—was the only international entity that investigated the killing (there has been no indication that the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court has). Based on open-source information and interviews with POWs from Olenivka (including survivors from barracks 200), OHCHR established, *inter alia*, that it was not HIMARS rockets that hit the barracks and that one of the projectiles that hit the barracks likely flew from the southeast, i.e., from the territory occupied by the Russian Federation. The internal UN analysis concluded that it was the Russian Federation who planned and executed the attack; the UN, however, never publicly blamed Russia.

The Russian Federation did not demonstrate any evidence of a HIMARS strike on barracks 200, except for fragments of two M31 rockets, which witnesses did not see *in situ* and which were brought from an unknown location for the demonstration to journalists. Available evidence (such as the scale of damage to the barracks and the physical impossibility for a projectile that exploded near the entry gate to come from the northwest) clearly indicates that it was not HIMARS rockets, as the Russian side claimed, that hit the barracks.

No photo or video footage of fragments of the explosive items that exploded in barracks 200 are publicly available, while this report shows that HIMARS fragments demonstrated to journalists had nothing to do with the attack. Only the testimonies of POWs who saw those fragments *in situ* on 29 July, as well as images of holes and scars the fragmentation left around the barracks, and the testimonies of injured POWs (from whom fragments were extracted), are available. They all indicate that the fragments most likely belonged to barrelled artillery ammunition.

An intense thermal impact on the POWs and barracks' interior was a distinctive feature of the explosions in barracks 200. The relative lack of flammable material in the barracks implies that the explosive items themselves produced the initial extremely short and extremely high-temperature impact, which in turn caused a prolonged fire in the barracks. This is characteristic of thermobaric ammunition.

Available evidence allows estimating the power of the blast waves produced by the explosions in the barracks only approximately, but points to the explosions weaker than that from HIMARS M31 rockets. Some survivors compared it with the power of 152-155mm high-explosive fragmentation (HE-frag) artillery projectiles. Each explosion destroyed and threw several meters away concrete and metal objects weighing together about 1 ton.

A clear understanding of the damage to the internal ceiling and the external roof is instrumental in understanding the impacts of the explosions on the barracks and, consequently, in identifying the type of ammunition and the weapons used. The flat internal ceiling comprised 42 corrugated tinplate sheets sized 1.10-1.15 x 5.8-6.0 meters. Only 15 remained in their original places, while the rest were plucked down entirely or partially. The gable external roof comprised 44 corrugated tinplate sheets sized approximately 0.8 x 10 meters. By 30 July, only 23 sheets of the roof remained in their places (some shifted slightly or were bent), while 21 sheets were absent. As most of them were plucked by the explosions in the barracks, some could be manually removed from their places on the morning of 29 July.

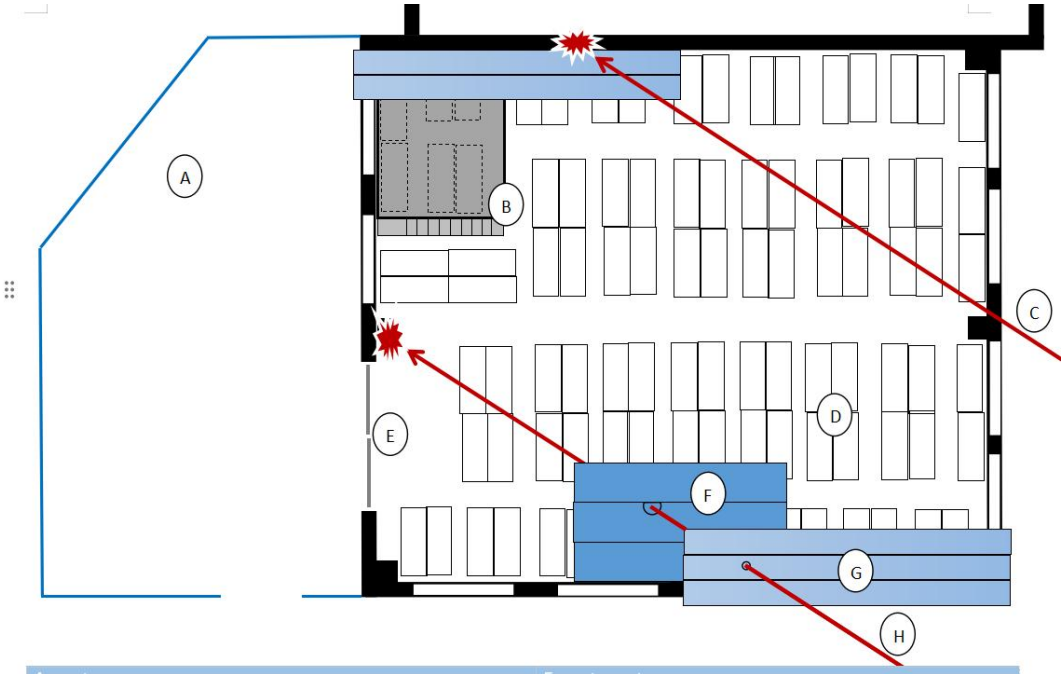
The analysis of testimonies of Ukrainian POWs from Olenivka (both those who had been in barracks 200 and in 'old' barracks during the attack) concludes that there were four explosions in the industrial zone of the colony: two explosions outside barracks 200 (one far from it and the second one near the barracks) with an interval of about a minute between them, followed by two almost simultaneous explosions in the barracks: near the entry gate and "in the roof." Available material evidence supports these POW testimonies and indicates that there were indeed two explosions in the barracks that heavily damaged it and killed or injured the POWs inside: the one near the entry gate was the first, and the one "in the roof" was the second.

The first projectile that hit the barracks penetrated the external roof and internal ceiling and detonated upon hitting the concrete column to the right of the entry gate. The 3D model of the barracks (1:58) helped identify two places where the projectile likely pierced the internal ceiling, having plucked two of its sheets. These places correspond to the angles of descent of the projectile and the azimuths of its trajectory as 33° and 126°, and 28° and 116°, respectively. The likely hole in a sheet of the external ceiling made by the projectile makes 33° and 126° the most probable projectile's angle of descent and the azimuth of its trajectory.

The impacts produced by the first projectile allows a narrowing down of the list of types of ammunition that could have hit the barracks. They shall be able to: (a) produce an intense thermal effect; (b) produce a strong blast wave; (c) produce a fragmentation impact; (d) be shelled along the trajectory with a high angle of descent; (e) move at a relatively low speed; and (f) be equipped with a delayed action fuse.

Survivors described the second explosion in the barracks as occurring "in the roof." Video footage and satellite imagery helped identify the location of the explosion, which was where the external roof connected to the northern wall, adjacent to another workshop to the north. The explosion destroyed a concrete block of the wall, above the roof line, sending debris into the yard northwest of the barracks. Some fragments likely fell onto the metal booth inside the barracks as well. The explosion caused extensive damage to both the external roof and the internal ceiling, particularly in section 1 of the roof and the ceiling underneath it. It is likely that the insulation material in the attic caught fire due to the explosion. The explosive item was kinetic, and there is no evidence suggesting that it could have been fired from any direction other than that of the first projectile. The projectile that detonated in the roof appears to meet at least four of the six parameters of the first projectile.

Two explosions occurred outside the barracks before the two explosions that damaged the barracks. Survivors described the first explosion as being quite distant from the barracks; it did not leave a sizeable crater or cause significant damage to the colony's buildings or other structures. This explosion was likely caused by ammunition with limited explosive power. According to POWs, the second explosion happened much closer to the barracks. It shattered some windows, and fragments from the explosion rattled against the corrugated tinplate sheets of the barracks. Despite the absence of craters near the barracks, evidence suggests two possible areas to the west and northwest of the barracks where this explosion could have occurred. While there are various theories for the two explosions outside the barracks, only one of them fully aligns with all the available evidence: the adjustment of fire (with the use of projectiles with low explosive power) observed via a UAV. After the first projectile landed far from the barracks, the second landed much closer, followed by two high-explosive projectiles that struck the barracks almost simultaneously.



A - anteroom	E - entry gate
B - metal booth with bunk bends underneath	F - internal ceiling
C - trajectory of the second projectile that hit the barracks	G - external roof
D - bunk beds	H - trajectory of the first projectile that hit the barracks

Available evidence proves that the ammunition that was used in the attacks on the barracks was neither improvised explosive devices (IEDs) nor incendiary. The three types of ammunition that broadly meet the parameters of the projectile that hit the column near the entry gate have been: (a) man-portable rocket-propelled thermobaric grenades (RPTGs); (b) anti-tank guided missiles (ATGMs), and (c) barrelled artillery ammunition (BAA). Of them, only BAA fully meets all parameters; besides, testimonies of survivors who saw *in situ* fragmentation of the projectiles that hit the barracks indicate that these fragments were typical for BAA and not typical for RPTGs and ATGMs.

The only BAA in possession of the AFRF that can produce an intense thermal effect and otherwise meet all parameters of the ammunition in question is 3VOF119 (3ВОФ119): a Russian Federation-developed 120mm rifled round comprised of the 3OF74 (3ОФ74) thermobaric high-explosive fragmentation projectile and its fuze, and a charge system. The AFRF have been using 3VOF119 in the war in Ukraine.

As 3OF74 could only be delivered by the 2A51/60/80/80-1 gun-howitzer-mortar, thus report finds that this was the weapon used in the attack. In service since 1981, the 2A51/60/80/80-1 has undergone several modifications and exists in both towed (Nona-K) and self-propelled versions. Several AFRF and RAAG units operating in Ukraine have been equipped with the 2A51/60/80/80-1 on self-propelled platforms (Nona-S, Nona-SVK, Vena, and Hosta) which were, therefore, readily available for the attack on barracks 200.

The most probable angle of descent of the first projectile that hit the barracks (≈33°) allows for approximating the distance from which the barracks was shelled: 2 to 8 kilometers. There is only one human settlement on the trajectory of this projectile: the village of Liubivka. The trajectory goes through the isolated southwest outskirt of the village at 2,300 meters from the barracks. Two big buildings standing there (one of them of hangar type) could be a suitable place for a temporary stay of the attacking team, its weapons and other vehicles. Other more distant locations on the trajectory are open fields and rural roads, which seem less convenient for the attacking team's placement in terms of sheltering and accuracy of fire.

The false flag attack on barracks 200 was likely an element of a broader Russian effort to derail the increasing supply of Western weapons to Ukraine that likely included other false flag operations. Such an effort should have required an order from the highest state level. The specific attack's plan (general or detailed) should have been approved by 15 July, while its implementation on 28 July could be linked not only to the UNSC meeting on Ukraine on 29 July but to a general deadline for all similar false flag operations.

The report finds that the Russian Ministry of Defence, and specifically the Russian Armed Forces, were the planners and organizers of the attack. The allegation of the Main Intelligence Department of the Ukrainian Ministry of Defense (GUR) that the Wagner Group planned and organized the attack on its own is not supported by evidence and should be excluded. The false flag operation also could not be a local 'DPR' initiative. A group of the Russian military, most likely affiliated with AFRF General Staff, planned the attack at the Moscow level and coordinated preparations with Federal Service for Executing Punishments (FSIN) while senior military officials approved it. The organization of the attack on the spot was most likely done by a group of individuals (called here a 'coordination and control team', a CCT) who visited the colony before the attack and were likely present in the colony on 29 July, and 9 and 10 August.

Specifically, after FSIN personnel in the colony organized the transfer of 200 POWs to hastily adapted barracks 200, an attacking team comprising of 10-14 experienced military equipped with one or two self-propelled platforms for 2A51/60/80/80-1 and a UAV shelled barracks 200 under the muffling sound of outgoing fire from a BM-21 Grad (122mm multiple launch rocket system). Two adjustment projectiles (practice or smoke) landed west of the barracks: one at a distance and another very close. Then, in a minute or so, the attacking team fired two 3OF74 projectiles that almost simultaneously hit barracks 200. The first one penetrated the external roof and internal ceiling and hit the western wall of the barracks near the entry gate. The second one hit the barracks' northern wall just above the external roof's level.

The attacking team most probably belonged to an AFRF unit equipped with 2A51/60/80/80-1 that was located not far from the colony. Special attention shall be paid to the 61st and 155th separate naval infantry brigades and the 11th Separate Guards Motor-Rifle Regiment: three experienced units equipped with 2A51/60/80/80-1 platforms (Nona-S and Nona-SVK), that were located most closely to Olenivka, near Donetsk and Vuhledar. High-level military officials in Moscow, the Investigative Committee, FSIN personnel in the colony, the staff of the Joint Centre for Control and Coordination (JCCC), and various 'DPR' officials participated in the cover-up activities. Altogether, at least two dozen individuals should be directly involved in the planning, organization, and implementation of the attack on barracks 200, while several additional dozens were engaged in the cover-up activities.

Several assumptions can be made about why the attack was organized the way it was. Most likely, the idea of shelling barracks 200 from barrelled artillery originated from a general directive to stage a killing of Ukrainian POWs with western weapons. It could have undergone several modifications before it took its final shape. The planting of an IED was likely considered as one of the options, but it was rejected. The choice of 3VOF119 and A51/60/80/80-1 is most likely explained by their optimal combination of explosive power, accuracy, and availability.

The simultaneous hit by two projectiles was the plan, likely because the perpetrators believed that the impact of two 3OF74 projectiles would better resemble those caused by M31 rockets and that the overlapping effects of the two explosions would complicate the assessment of the overall destruction by external observers. The attack from an easterly direction was given preference to a more natural (for a staged false flag operation) westerly direction, likely because it was ultimately

considered more convenient in terms of safety and secrecy and was believed to be non-transparent to those who would see the results of the attack.

Unless any perpetrators confess what they did, other avenues for establishing their identities should be pursued. In that case that the media make details of the Olenivka killing, as presented in this report, broadly known, there is a chance that some people with knowledge of the attack on barracks 200 (relatives, fellows, or otherwise informed) would share their knowledge with the investigation or the general public.

The Ukrainian investigation is recommended to carry out full-scale explosive tests with 3OF74 charges on a building of similar size, with an external roof and internal ceiling akin to those of barracks 200, and to comprehensively review publicly available photos, videos, and satellite imagery to corroborate the findings of this report concerning ammunition and weapons used in the attack, as well the area from which the attack was likely launched and the roads to the village of Liubivka.

As to the identification of individual perpetrators, the investigation is recommended to (a) identify AFRF and RAAG units equipped with 2A51/60/80/80-1 platforms and located near Olenivka; (b) additionally analyze all intercepts in the narrow area of the colony; (c) check the lists of decorated Russian military; (d) interview Russian POWs on Olenivka specifically; (e) stimulate Russian POWs in Ukrainian captivity to testify on Olenivka; (f) invite informed individuals to testify through a protected channel; and (g) announce a monetary reward for the information related to the attack on barracks 200. Special attention should be paid to the 61st and 155th separate naval infantry brigades and the 11th Separate Guards Motor-Rifle Regiment.